

EUGENICS IN AUSTRIA*

1. VITAL STATISTICS

THE Federal State of Austria—according to the latest census, taken on March 22nd, 1934—has a population of 6,750,000 persons. Of that number about 2,000,000 live in Vienna and its immediate surroundings. The main figures about the movement of population during the last sixty years are summarized in the following table :

	Marriages	Births	Deaths	Surplus
	per 1,000	inhabitants		
1871-5 ...	8.6	34.5	31.0	3.5
1876-80 ...	7.0	34.0	28.8	5.2
1881-5 ...	7.2	32.8	28.1	4.7
1886-90 ...	7.3	32.0	26.8	5.2
1891-5 ...	7.5	31.7	25.5	6.2
1896-1900 ...	7.9	31.5	23.3	8.2
1901-5 ...	7.6	30.3	21.9	8.4
1906-10 ...	7.7	27.8	20.3	7.5
1911-13 ...	7.4	24.9	18.8	6.1
1919-20 ...	12.9	20.6	19.7	0.9
1921-5 ...	9.6	22.2	15.8	6.4
1926-30 ...	7.5	17.6	14.4	3.2
1931 ...	7.4	15.9	14.0	1.9
1932 ...	6.7	15.2	13.9	1.3
1933 ...	6.5	14.3	13.2	1.1

It is interesting to study the changes in the birth-rate in the different parts of the country. This, as may be seen in the following table, was in the period 1871-5 higher in Vienna than in the rest of the country, while to-day the opposite is the case.

	Birth-rate			Death-rate
	1871-5	1901-5	1932	1932
Vienna ...	40.2	29.4	8.1	13.6
Lower Austria ...	37.4	30.2	14.6	13.2
Upper Austria ...	31.1	31.2	18.5	14.8
Salzburg ...	31.0	31.4	19.1	14.2
Styria ...	31.4	29.0	17.7	14.5
Carinthia ...	31.4	32.2	21.5	14.1
Tyrol ...	25.4	30.3	20.1	13.2
Vorarlberg ...	30.6	28.8	19.6	12.7
Burgenland ...	39.5	36.1	22.3	15.0

The birth-rate of Vienna is extremely low—much lower, for instance, than in London or Paris. Only in Berlin is the rate equally low. In Berlin, however, the differential birth-rate has nearly disappeared, while in Vienna it still exists, the birth-rate being much higher in the proletarian parts of the

city than in those occupied by the middle classes.

Birth-rate 1932

Central districts with middle-class population :			
1. Innere Stadt ...	...	...	4.6
3. Landstrasse ...	...	...	5.6
4. Wieden ...	...	...	4.8
5. Margareten ...	...	...	5.8
6. Mariahilf ...	...	...	4.8
7. Neubau ...	...	...	3.3
8. Josefstadt ...	...	...	5.1
9. Alsergrund ...	...	...	5.1
Working-class districts :			
10. Favoriten ...	...	...	9.6
11. Simmering ...	...	...	10.7
16. Ottakring ...	...	...	7.8
20. Brigittenau ...	...	...	9.4
21. Floridsdorf ...	...	...	10.5

It must be noted that these are crude rates. The age composition of the various districts may show great differences. Nothing can be stated exactly until the results of the last census are published, and that will take several years.

The percentage of illegitimate births is very high in Austria : in 1932 it was 27 per cent. In the provinces Salzburg and Styria about a third of all children are born out of wedlock ; in Carinthia the proportion is over 42 per cent.!

The difference between the urban and rural death-rates seems to be much smaller than exists between the two birth-rates. Infant mortality in Austria was 98 per 1,000 for legitimate and 128 for illegitimate births in 1932. In Vienna the corresponding figures were 66 and 116. Using the method of J. Brownlee I have estimated the expectation of life at birth : it is 55.3 years for males and 59.2 years for females.

2. RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Austria has no centre of eugenic research and teaching ; but a number of independent scientists are working in the field of heredity and genetics. Among the most distinguished may be named the botanist Tschermak, one of the rediscoverers of the Mendelian laws, the endocrinologist, Julius Bauer, and the world-famous psychiatrist Wagner-Jauregg. The last-named is chairman of the Society

* The author of this article is a regular contributor from Vienna. In a covering letter he writes : " Although what I have to say is completely objective, I do not think it would be wise, under present conditions, to publish my name."

for Human Heredity and Endocrinology (*Verein für menschliche Erblchkeitslehre und Endokrinologie*) in Vienna.

In former years a course of eugenics was held at the University of Vienna by Professor Heinrich Reichel. It was never attended by more than a very few undergraduates. In 1933, Reichel was appointed director of the hygienic institute of the medical school at Graz University, and as a result eugenics has disappeared from the Vienna medical curriculum.

The general Press shows no interest for eugenical problems; nor does there exist in the whole of Austria a single scientific or popular journal devoted totally or partially to eugenics.

3. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC POINT OF VIEW

The "New Austria" is a catholic authoritarian State; its government is catholic; its new constitution claims to realize the principles laid down in the papal encyclical "Quadragesimo Anno." The Roman Church dominates Austria, and it is therefore of primary importance to know its position and that of its adherents towards the problems of eugenics.

The official document thereon is the encyclical "Casti Connubii." Being a message from the Pope it imposes binding rules on the conduct of the faithful. It has been so thoroughly surveyed in eugenics literature* that it seems unnecessary to deal with it again here.

On the other hand, it may be of interest to discuss an attempt that has been made to translate the general principles of "Casti Connubii" into concrete proposals. In January 1934 a meeting was held in Vienna to discuss "The Position of the Family in Nation and State." Its sponsors were a group of catholic sociologists; and besides them were present a great number of priests, politicians, and carefully selected scientists and medical men. Some members of the government also took an active part. Many

resolutions were passed, most of them touching on problems of interest to eugenicists.

The most important points are summarized below.

1. Introduction of eugenical instruction in the popular and the secondary schools and of a compulsory course in eugenics in the medical curriculum.
2. Establishment of "maternity schools," where the knowledge necessary for the housewife and mother should be imparted by specially trained teachers. To every maternity school should be attached a home for mothers and infants where the girls might do practical work. The maternity schooling should be compulsory and free of charge. Consent to marriage was to be given only if a certificate from a maternity school was presented.
3. Establishment of numerous marriage consultation centres, organized on denominational lines.
4. Introduction of compulsory health certificates before engagement or at any rate before marriage.
5. Prohibition of consanguineous marriages according to canonical law.

The eugenic value of the next two points seems to be very doubtful:

6. Suppression of the production and the sale of contraceptives and also of all popular lectures about birth-control. Needless to say, abortion is to remain a capital crime.
7. Prohibition of castration and sterilization for any except therapeutic purposes—in plain terms, the prohibition of eugenic sterilization. It was resolved that the violation of this prohibition should be punishable by imprisonment.

A number of further proposals encroach on the economic field:

8. Income-tax rebates for families with many children. Appropriate reductions should also be granted from education fees, and train, tram and bus fares.
9. Raising of the bachelor tax.
10. Higher family allowances for public servants, beginning from the third child.

* EUGENICS REVIEW, April 1931, p. 41; July 1931, p. 103; and July 1933, p. 78.

- II. Establishment of compensation funds for workers and employees within the corporative organizations.

In connection with that meeting and to perpetuate its ideas a Union for the Protection of the Family (*Verband "Familien-schutz"*) was founded. There is also a plan to establish a "family museum"; but up to now only a Gregor Mendel memorial exhibition has been arranged at the natural history museum (1889-1934).

4. THE PROBLEM OF RACE

Austria, like Central Europe in general, is a country of very mixed race. The bulk of the population is composed of brachycephalic types, the dinaric and the alpine race. The nordic admixture was estimated by H. F. K. Guenther at 30 to 35 per cent. (But that was before political relations between Germany and Austria had become so strained; to-day the estimate would probably be much lower!) The Mediterranean race forms only a very small element in the population.

Race mixture is especially marked in Vienna, where there are more than 200,000 Jews, and about the third part of the remaining population is of Slav—especially Czech—origin.

The extreme "race theory," which is the foundation of the Nazi doctrine, is against the principles of the Roman Catholic Church. There are no laws in Austria tending towards a racial separation of "Aryans" and Jews.

As Austria has no colonies, colour problems are of no importance.

5. NAZIS AND MARXISTS

The attitude of the Austrian Nazis towards the problems of eugenics is of course exactly the same as that of their German comrades. They believe in the innate superiority of the nordic race and the inevitable bad results of race crossing. They approve of the racial policy of the Third Realm. The "nordic" type of eugenics is also advocated by the Viennese Society for Race Culture (*Wiener Gesellschaft für Rassenpflege*).

The Austrian Marxists have never been

much interested in eugenical problems, environment and education occupying a far more prominent place in their philosophy of life. As a result of the desperate economic conditions, neo-malthusian ideas are very widely spread among the working classes. Before the events of February 1934 there were birth-control centres organized by the social-democrats in all the twenty-one districts of Vienna. These were all immediately dissolved by the government.

In this connection it may be added, however, that "safe period calendars" can be seen in the window of every other bookshop in Vienna. They are sold freely, "safe period" intercourse being a method of birth-control approved by the Church. Unfortunately, it is not regarded as a safe method by the majority of gynæcologists.

6. APPLIED EUGENICS

Among the laws and administrative decrees of the "New Austria" only two are of eugenic importance:

1. The so-called "Law against Double Earning" (*Doppelverdienergesetz*). One of its clauses decrees that female public servants must lose their position on marriage. The idea was, of course, to bring women back to their natural functions as housewives and mothers. The real result, however, has been that numerous young teachers and other qualified workers must remain unmarried, as the incomes now prevailing among men are simply not sufficient for maintaining a family. Even the catholic meeting mentioned above has raised objections against this truly dysgenic measure.
2. The marriage consultation centre of the Community of Vienna has been closed by the new administration. It was founded by Professor Tandler in 1922 as the first of its kind in Europe, and was the only one of any importance in Austria. In the twelve years of its existence it was consulted by nearly 5,000 persons.